
Koopman Rare Art

Director's Choice - Timo Koopman A Set of Three George II Cups & Covers

With the approach of TEFAF Maastricht 7th - 14th March, I wanted to showcase one of the highlights we will be exhibiting this year.

We are on the eternal quest to find perfection and every once in a while, you come across something of such exceptional beauty that it literally takes your breath away. This extraordinary suite of cups and covers leaves the admirer in awe of the technical ability, grace of design, and inspired by the beauty that the royal goldsmith Thomas Heming achieved in the creation of these magnificent objects. I am proud to present these as my choice this week.



A Set of Three George II Cups & Covers

London, 1752

By Thomas Heming

Height: 39.8 cm, 16 in; and 26.7 cm, 10.5 in

Total Weight: 5,862 g, 188 oz 9 dwt

With original travelling cases

These exquisite campana-shaped cups stand on a circular base cast and chased with foliate scrolls and fruit vines. On the body of each cup, decorated with a salamander skin pattern, are cast and applied vines and insects. The finials on the covers are formed as seated Bacchic putto. The smaller cups feature C-shaped handles, whilst the larger cup's handles are formed as a Bacchante with a tambourine and Pan with a flute and grapes. These handles rise from gaping lion's masks.

The overall form of Heming's bacchic cups and covers derive from French designs of the 1740s, most notably those of Pierre Germain (1720-1783) of whom Heming would have certainly been aware. The cups offer a more stylistic influence of the rococo works from the 1730s and early 1740s of goldsmiths such as Frederick Kandler, Paul de Lamerie and George Wickes. The bacchic putto finial can be found on a cup and cover in the Royal Collection, attributed to George Wickes and a similar finial features on a cup by de Lamerie in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum, New York, dating from 1742, as cited by Hilary Young in his article titled 'Thomas Heming and the Tatton Cup' (see *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 125, no. 962, pp. 282-285). Young also suggests that the handles of the immense Jerningham Wine Cistern, modelled by the sculptor John Michael Rysbrack and executed in silver by Charles Kandler, may also have been influential, as the handles do have a strong resemblance.



These perfect examples of naturalism in silver are covered in vine tendrils, leaves, bunches of grapes, caterpillars and flies. Here Heming's 'musca depicta' is not created with a brush but rather modelled first in wax, then cast and lastly hand chased to bring his three-dimensional interpretation of perfection to life.

Musca depicta ("painted fly" in Latin; plural: muscae depictae) is a depiction of a fly as a conspicuous element of various paintings. The feature was widespread in 15th- and 16th-century European paintings, and its presence has been subject to various interpretations by art historians. Many argue that the fly holds religious significance, carrying connotations of sin, corruption or mortality. There exist several anecdotes from the biographies of various artists who, as apprentices, allegedly painted a fly with such skill as to fool their teacher into believing it was real. Well-known examples are those about Giotto as an apprentice of Cimabue and Andrea Mantegna and his master Francesco Squarcione. These anecdotes were widespread and contributed to the humorous interpretation of the trompe-l'œil flies.

It is easy to envisage these ideas when on gazing upon these cups and covers.

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in our gallery located in 12 Dover Street, London, W1S 4LL

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